

Raiders AND CORPORATIONS

Welcome to Babcom

This newsletter seeks to provide an outlet for the creativity of fans of AoG's Babylon 5 Wars and Fleet Action.

We intend this to be a monthly production, composed mainly with material submitted by players of the games, with some supplemental coverage of events in the Babylon 5 universe.

The theme of this month's Babcom is Raiders and Corporations. Coverage includes an analysis of Pirate motivations and a scenario with accompanying fiction, scenario details and new ship SCSs.

But the newsletter is not limited to this.

Inside you will also find information on the construction methods used for Fleet Action ships, an analysis of the Centauri Haven, a scenario dealing with an early encounter between Narn and Earthforce, and an in-depth look into the minds of Brakiri tacticians.

Enjoy.

SPECIAL FEATURE: FLEET ACTION SHIP CONSTRUCTION

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End of nightmares

FICTION: By Ben Rubery

CAPTAIN Matthews looked in horror at the screen in front of him. It was a view of two of the convoy freighters, one of them an expanding cloud of debris, the other dropping Delta-Vs from concealed launch bays and turning towards another freighter.

The convoy was not undefended, as well as the escort frigate he commanded there was a Tethys police cutter. As he gave the orders to launch his own flight of Delta-Vs, he felt a chill to be in action again. It had never been the same since the Minbari war, his whole squadron killed by a superior enemy, picked up by chance and spending the rest of the war in the hospital, the end of his career in the military. Before that every time he'd climbed into his Nova Starfury it had been with a rush of excitement and adrenalin.

But now he dreaded combat. It was all he knew however, and the only way he could earn a decent living was to take the job with the Kalico corporation. Which had got him here, commanding a civilian escort ship, watching over a few freighters, and training civilian pilots and crews. And it had been quiet. Raider activity had been dropping off in the past few years, but now on the edges of EA space they were fighting the Minbari again, along with traitor humans and they were back. Maybe they would beat the Minbari this time. He hoped they would at least survive. But the pirates knew this meant a large part of the EA fleet was spread out engaging rebelling colonies and alien fleets. So they'd flocked to EA space for the easy pickings. They were everywhere. And unfortunately that included here.

Captain Matthews concentrated on the screen. It had taken most of a minute to turn the ship around to deal with the Wolf Raider at the rear of the convoy, but they were closing to effective weapons range now, the pilots he'd trained forming a wedge to attack the Raider fighters.

But while his ship and the police cutter had been turning the Raider had shot the thrusters off another freighter.

Captain Matthews suddenly got a very very bad feeling. The Wolf Raider was completely ignor-

ing the incoming escorts, and was currently closing on a tanker, its EW readout spiking as it painted it.

Which meant it didn't regard the escorts as a threat. Which meant there were more pirates somewhere.

He tapped the comm to talk to the Tethys captain. "Captain Hayes, I think there are more enemy ships out there, this one is ignoring us as if we'd already been...."

"Jump point forming captain. One ship incoming. It's a big one."

And popping into realspace was a big blocky ugly raider ship, a battlewagon, which out-gunned the escorts and carried two more squadrons of fighters. The raiders were right to be acting as if they'd already been destroyed. Two squadrons of raider fighters streamed towards them. They'd fallen right into a trap.

"Comm, distress call, all EA frequencies. Order fighters to break off current target and move to engage new bogey."

The Tethys wheeled towards the battlewagon, and Matthews ordered his helmsman to come about at the same time. The result was predictable. Either Matthews' ship would be destroyed, or the Tethys would. The question was whether they could damage the battlewagon enough to give the convoy a chance to escape.

The battlewagons EW spiked, but it was painting the more threatening Tethys, and the Delta-Vs swarmed towards it.

Matthews watched this mistake on their part, as it was obvious to him that the Tethys would be a small cloud of debris in a very short time, and there was no reason to be risking the fighters taking fire from its light pulse cannons. But they weren't pilots like he had been, they didn't know how to think tactically.

And half a dozen of them died for it, their craft torn apart in a fury of LPC fire. As the battlewagon pounded the Tethys for all it was worth, pulses of energy slamming into its hull, followed by a stream of laser energy that cut what was left in half, the return fire from the Tethys and the fire from his own frigate gouged out large chunks of its forward structure.

And as the Tethys died silently in the night, it became clear to Matthews that they'd seriously damaged the battlewagon. All its forward batteries had been destroyed, but that didn't matter when its fighters were turning to come after his frigate.

"Target the enemy fighters, I want as many of them dead as possible. Have our fighters get in close and pivot to face them."

And his little frigate was bracketed by its own arrow-headed fighters, turned to face the incoming enemy. Matthews had trained all the pilots himself, and they were good, almost as good as military.

And they were incoming. The particle beam turrets on his ship swivelled to threaten them. But there was something different about a few of the enemy fighters.

"Tactical, give me a readout on the enemy fighter approaching mark 40 by 30."

The read out came up on the screen. Some of the enemy fighters didn't have the normal two gun configuration, they had one large underslung gun beneath their nose, a point to their arrowhead and large enough to laugh at the armour on the hull of his little frigate.

"Tactical, target those fighters, and fire when they reach optimum range. Have our fighters defend against the rest."

And a second later the fire started. An LPC and two SPBs opened up on the approaching enemy, who'd been sensible enough not to come in at an angle where both LPCs could fire at them. His fighters dueled the enemy dogfighters.

Five of the six enemy assault fighters died in the hail of fire, but the sixth held his fire until the last minute, then calmly blew the LPC turret on that side of his ship off.

Another flight raced across his hull, shooting chunks out of it, destroying an aft thruster and an SPB.

And the last flight duelled with his boys, and soon five fighters were slowly moving puffs of gas, two of his and three of theirs'.

The battlewagon was moving to engage the freighters now, keeping its broken nose away from the guns he'd got, while the Wolf Raider

A view from the Command Deck

BEFORE the popularisation of the Internet, many avid gamers have always kept track of the latest developments in their games either by magazines or newsletter. And while we have the B5W forums and mailing list on the Internet to replace them in modern days, they are not the same. The forums and mailing list are like



Command Deck

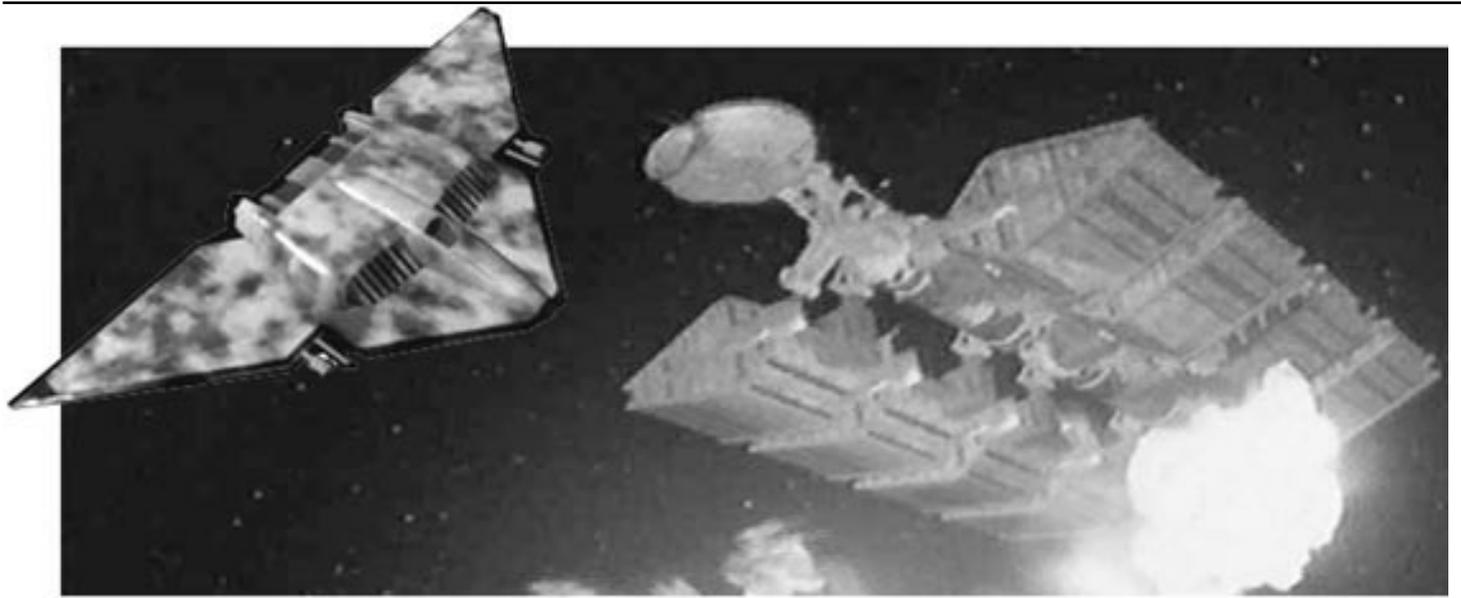
By Editor, Christopher Phang

open debates where one person can suggest or point out something and more often than naught, the main point gets drowned out or side-tracked. The newsletter is more

ordered where everyone can see what is trying to be said without the noise, of course not everyone will agree but like kosh says, "The truth is a three-edged sword." Our main goal here is to present to our fellow gamers something they can easily digest while providing as much information as possible. The best thing about it is all the

articles/tips/etc are provided by the gamers themselves.

The Babcom newsletter aims to create a closer community for the B5 players and provide a conducive medium to explore the game further in depth. So join us and build up this community by telling us your say and tactics to share with your fellow gamers. "



accelerated to engage him, and the enemy fighters formed up to make another run.

There were sixteen of them, fortunately all but one were standard model fighters. But he had four fighters of his own. And only two anti-fighter guns left.

However the MPC had finished cycling and could be fired, and as the pirates closed in he had tactical divert all the sensors to target one small group of enemy fighters, and the MPC fired, along with the remaining SPB.

3 MPC pulses hit enemy fighters, one striking one in the middle and literally folding it in half with the force of the impact before it exploded. The SPB picked another off.

But the enemy returned fire, hanging at a range where his fighters couldn't hit them but they could hit his frigate. The LPC intercepted a few of their shots, but fire started ripping into the front of his ship.

"MPC offline sir. One of the forward thrusters is destroyed, and the other is moving into the red. Bulkheads 2 through 5 are open to space."

Matthews knew he was going to die. They were finished. They had two small anti-fighter weapons left, 12 raider fighters out there shooting at them, and a pristine wolf raider moving to finish them off.

"Channel all thrust through remaining aft thruster. Start getting people to the shuttles, order the fighters to try to cover us."

If they were going to get any of the crew out in shuttles, they needed all the enemy fighters dead to be able to do it. An enemy flight was caught off guard by Matthews maneuver, as he had hoped it would be, and the remaining guns he had ripped into them. 12 to 6. His own fighters

attacked the rest of the enemy fighters, knocking two of them out, but losing two of their own.

And the wolf raider was less than a minute away. Four enemy fighters left, two of his. But those four fighters looped around the rear of his ship and strafed the belly.

"Shuttle bay collapsed sir. No one was in there yet, but we aren't going anywhere in the shuttles."

"Tactical!" He was desperate now. "Destroy those fighters."

As they looped about for another pass one of them exploded as an SPB hit it, another one caught two pulses and the last two were jumped by his fighters. One was destroyed outright, the other was left drifting in space. But they'd got a few shots off, and he could hear the hull echo with the hits.

"We're on the point of structural collapse sir. And the reactors starting to fail, Nilsson says we can't have weapons for more than another minute."

And the wolf raider was almost within weapons range now. They were going to die. He'd done his best, he'd fought a better fight than he ever had before. But they were still going to die, killed by their own people. It might have been the war, but he never thought he'd be killed by a human. He'd had dreams of being strangled in his sleep, and opening his eyes to see a bony ridge around the head of his killer. But the people who'd kill him would be all too human.

"Sir, I'm picking up signals from the freighters, they're surrendering."

He didn't blame them. They might live that way.

"Sir, I'm picking up a jump gate opening. It's three ships."

The tactical readout came up. Minbari. Not a ship

he'd seen before, far smaller and sleeker than the Sharlin war cruisers he'd fought against, but definitely Minbari. Apparently the Minbari fleet had already penetrated this deep into EA territory.

Maybe his nightmare would come true and he would be killed by a Minbari. And then they opened fire.

The blast he watched on the screen was the wolf raider, and the Minbari ships snapped round and targetted the battlewagon, switching to a pulse weapon as they closed and easily tearing it to pieces at ranges the battlewagon couldn't touch them at because of their stealth technology.

Then one of them turned to come towards his frigate. They'd destroyed the ships that were threats first. Now they were picking off the stragglers. He'd seen it a dozen times in the war. The sleek ship was almost on top of them, doubtless able to read that their weapons weren't powered. It locked onto them with a tractor, and pulled them to a docking position. He just sat there and waited for them. Resisting would only get them all killed.

And soon the bridge door was opening, and a Minbari stepped through. And another. And a human with a small black beard. The human spoke in a stereotypical english accent, like you heard in very old films. Those films had always irritated him, and his first wife had watched them far too often.

"Hello. Got your distress call. Thought we'd drop by and see if you needed a hand."

"I never thought I'd be happy to see a Minbari," he said. "Or so glad to hear an english accent."

The human didn't know quite what to make of that. But it didn't stop him talking. Matthews was just glad to be alive.

Civilian Escort Frigate

WITH the increase in Raider activity, the sophistication of weapons they were using, and the other pressures on the military for escort ships, corporations looked enviously at the warships the Belt Alliance had at its disposal and made a convincing case to the EA senate for allowing other corporations to manufacture warships. This was under-

taken by a military contractor that used to build Tethys class hulls for the EA navy, but was facing a reduction of orders due to the Omega policy of the EA government, and saw this as an opportunity to keep their yards open.

The civilian escort frigate was designed to be able to take on an equivalent sized Raider ship with the support of a convoy, and to carry enough fighters to counter raider fighters.

The Light Pulse Cannons are

regarded as an excellent counter to the Raiders standard fighter, the Delta-V. Its short ranged weapons are not considered to be a handicap against raiders, but warships make short work of such small ships.

Raider Delta-V assault fighter

IN 2258 it became obvious to the EA that some of the raider fighters they were facing were equipped

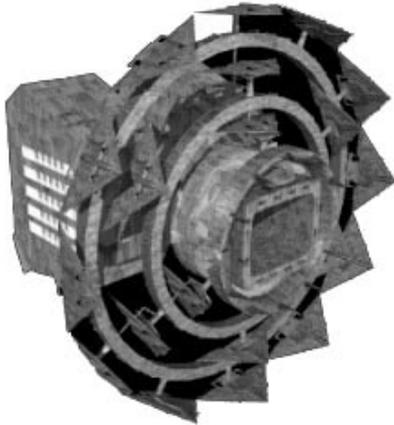
with heavier weapons than the standard production models of the Delta-V.

While it was discovered that the Narn were supplying paired particle guns and engineers to adapt the fighters and put a stop to, the War of Retribution spread a lot of Narn tech around, either as salvage or for sale by desperate Narn or unscrupulous Centauri.

This has made the assault Delta-V a common sight in Narn and former Narn space.

SCENARIO: END OF NIGHTMARES

By Ben Rubery



FORCES

Convoy Force

- Escort Frigate w/ 6 Delta-V
- EA Tethys Police Cutter (Kappa model)
- 3 civilian commercial transports, one fast
- 1 tanker, 1 bulk freighter

Ranger force

- 3 Whitestars

Raider Force

- Wolf Raider w/6 Delta-V

Jump-in Raider Force

- Battlewagon w/18 Delta-V,
6 Delta-V Assault

SETUP

I was thinking of having the convoy ships and wolf raider set up in fixed positions, with the battlewagon jumping in with a scatter from a preset hex on turn 3 and the Rangers coming in on turn 7. You could make the entry of both of these groups random, with the Battlewagon coming in d4+1 turns into the game, and the Rangers d6+3.

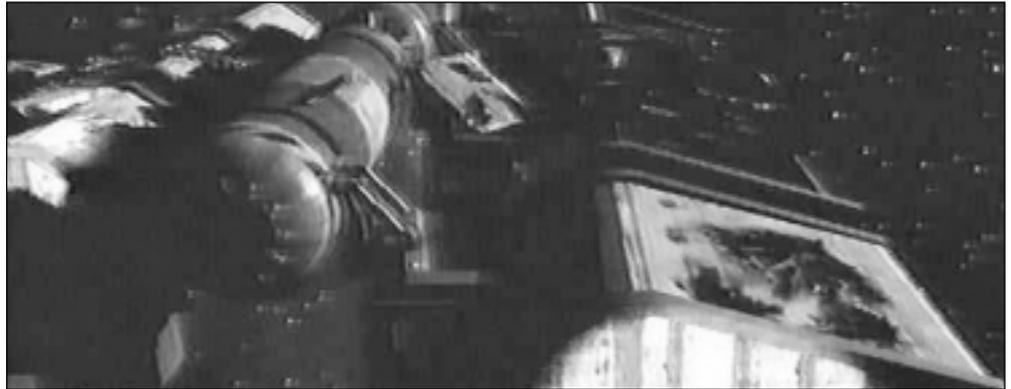
VICTORY CONDITIONS

I was trying to give the victory conditions some thought earlier, and raiders should have eliminate both escorts, all escort fighter and 75% of the convoy. Convoy player should have survive.

Adding old salts to new wounds

Raider Tactics: Or how to make a quick buck and survive.

Aaahhhrrrrr be mateys, let Reid "the Merciless" Hupach fill ye in on some o' me secrets on how to live to be an old pirate like meself. So sit yer petards down on the bulkhead and lissen up.



RAIDERS, Pirates, Buccaneers, Privateers, names which have inspired awe terror and hatred for hundreds of years. The way they fight and survive in a universe of powerful empires confuses many but in all truth it's a simple formula, never fight a fight you can't win handily and always go for the money.

Tactics, for a Raider group, is mostly dictated by the forces they have available. For most that isn't much, but for the rare few who can field a large force times can be quite profitable. The main objectives for Raiders are, survive and go for the money.

That's enough about the philosophy of Raiders now we go for cold hard tactics. Most successful raider groups have the use of at least one jump capable ship this is key to the success of any operation. The Jump ship allow the Raiders to appear where and when they want to and also to get away in case of an ambush or trap. This of course means that ship can usually only take a support role for combat since it is too valuable to lose. Any Raider group which has two capitol ships is extremely lucky, successful and of course hunted.

Raiders in B5 seem to be very heavy on fighters, this of course makes sense since fighters have the ability to do called shots on their targets. Speed is of utmost importance to a successful raider group and fighters can supply this. Get in knock out the weapons, knock out the thrusters and your target is at your mercy, fighters excel at this job.

LCV and MCV roles in Raider groups are varied but generally most are used to keep any escort ships busy while the fighters do their job. They can either eat a few fighters or group up and kill the escort frigate guarding the convoy. Under most conditions convoy escorts going to be MCV/HCV ships well within the ability of a raider group to handle.

Now comes the hard part to talk about, what happens when the convoy escort turns out to be a little more than you bargained for. Well my first

instinct is to get out of there, cut your losses and go. This is why your jump ship should be well away from the conflict so he can form the jump point and everyone gets away. This is of course the ideal situation for a clean getaway but all to often you have had to commit to many forces and if you leave you won't have enough money to pay last months bills. This is the time to get real mean and nasty. Odds are you will get chewed up but there are things you can do to keep your profit margin from bottoming out.

Plan A, see if you can coax your enemy to leave the convoy to chase your fleet while you double back to cut out a few freighters behind his back. If you can pull this off more power to you but most likely you will have to resort to Plan B. This is where the Cap ship and the freighters circle up and guard all the booty. This is for most raiders a no win situation, even if you defeat the Cap ship and steal a few freighters your ships will be so chewed up that profit isn't even in the picture anymore. You need to either leave to fight another day with hopefully a weaker target or make sure you kill the escort fast and then steal what you can catch. Neither is a good prospect.

There is no iron clad this will always work tactic for raiders, as I stated before it very much depends of your forces, never bite off more than you can chew. Now one of the problems I have seen with raider battles is the I'll fight to the death attitude by both sides, remember this isn't war its business, no matter how much money its not worth dying for. To many gamers can't realize that the average pirate fighter pilot won't commit suicide just to prove he's macho, or the baggage handler on the freighter won't fight the intruder with his spanner when he could surrender and live, it's not his money in either case.

Well that's enough about that problem. Remember Raider tactics should be guided by one motivation, Money, and how to get it without getting killed.

Greed is gory

Purple Rats Raider Group vs. EA recovery squadron

By NIKOLAS KOUMOUNDOUROS

IT IS 2248, just a few weeks after the end of the EA-Minbari war's sudden and surprising ending. Earth Force is scrambling to put back into service some of its damaged warships that survived the assault of the Minbari in the latest stages of the War.

A Hyperion Theta was leading a small Task Force when a small strike squadron of Minbari ships surprised it. The battle lasted only seconds with the EA ships destroyed in the first volley, except the Hyperion who suffered a critical C&C hit and was abandoned by its crew, only to be left drifting in space by the advancing Minbari. Now two forces race to the wounded ship: one is led by the former second in command of a Hermes that along with a part of his crew joined up in his cousin's Raider group, the knowledge of the Cruiser's location buying their position.

Set-Up

Use a central map and place others as the battle progresses, this is to be fought on a floating map. The battle would be expected to range in a map 2 maps high by 3 maps wide.

Neutral : Jump gate at 104 /15 (middle of lower third map to the right)

Raiders: 1 Heavy Hyperion Cruiser (Kutuzov), is at hex 1813 facing towards the upper right corner speed 2, 1 Dragonship (Wererat) with 12 Double-V medium fighters, 1 Barque (Squealer), 2 Sloops (Nosy, Mikey).

Earth Alliance: 1 Hyperion Pulse Cruiser (Kuznetsov) with 6 Starfury fighters, 1 Olympus corvette (Fearless), 1 Tethys Police Leader (Jaguar), 2 Tethys Police Cutters (Orion, Rhea).

The Kutuzov is heavily damaged and the raiders are slowly bringing its systems on line. When the Battle starts it is at hex 1917 moving toward the upper right corner at a speed of 4. Place the rest of the raider ships, up to 10 hexes around it speed up to 8, any facing. Fighters are deployed up to 7 hexes away from the Wererat, any facing speed up to 20. They are aware the EA ships are coming, as they've seen them jump in via the off-map jump gate.

The three Tethys arrive through the lower edge of the map, any speed up to 10 on turn 2. The Olympus and Hyperion arrive on turn 4 through the lower or left edge of the map, any speed up to 12. Fighters are deployed within 5 hexes of the Kuznetsov any heading, any speed.

The Raiders can escape either when their jump engines recharge or if they manage to get to the jump-gate.



Victory Condition

Raiders: Escape with the Hyperion. If both the Kutuzov and Wererat disengage successfully, the Raiders win a complete victory. If the Hyperion escapes they achieve a Major victory.

Earth: Destroy or retake the Hyperion in Raider hands. If this is done and the Dragonship or two of the other raider ships are destroyed or disabled the EA wins a total victory as long as your Hyperion is alive. If the Hyperion and one of the smaller raider ships are destroyed then this is a major victory. If just the Hyperion is destroyed but the rest of the raiders ships escape this is a partial victory.

Special Rules

Heavy Hyperion in Raider hands: The ship has suffered heavy fire (3 piercing Neutron laser shots to the sides), and is suffering the following damage : STB side: 20 on structure, 8 in thuster, aft-looking heavy Laser destroyed. Primary: 10 damage on C&C, 12 damage on structure, 6 damage on hangar. PORT iside: 12 damage on structure, 1 point in medium pulse cannon. This damage cannot be repaired in play.

As the raiders only recently boarded and took control of the Cruiser some of the systems are not back on line. The C&C, jump drive sensors and engine were the first, and till now the crew has all the light weapons and the aft looking Hvy Laser fully charged. One more system per turn

can be brought online. Note that a deactivated system would need to be armed at the usual rate, beginning on that turn. The jump drive is on the 16th round of charging, so in 9 rounds the Hyperion would be ready to jump out.

Dragonship : the Dragonship's Jump drive is recharging as well, but it is at the 13th round needing 11 more to recharge.

Ea Shuttles: Each EA ship can replace any of its shuttles with armed shuttles or breaching pods.

Tactics

The Raiders need to protect the Hyperion at any cost. The light ships, and secondly the Dragonship are expendable as long as the Hyperion disengages. Use the fighters to keep away the Starfuries and don't be afraid to use the Hyperion's weapons in battle: without it you're less powerful than the Ea ships.

Ea: go after the Hyperion as soon as you can. Be careful however as the rest of the Raider ships can really hurt you if you're careless and thus prevent you from reaching your goal. Concentrate your fire and choose quickly if you'll send the 3 Tethys's without waiting for the larger ships to delay the escaping raiders (and almost certainly die in the process), or attack with all your ships risking the raiders will be hard to catch later on.

Either tactic can work but each has its disadvantages.

Build your own B5 battlefleets

The general belief that Fleet Action is a direct conversion of Babylon 5 Wars is incorrect.

The ships, fighters and weapons found in the large-scale game are all built under their own points system.

*This is not to say there has been no attempt at parity: the formulas used in both systems to produce the "raw" or draft version of a new ship are in some ways parallel. But seeking an exact transfer of detail is impossible while expecting, at the same time, a simplified set of rules. As **DIOGENES** explains, Fleet Action ships are - in reality - built under a different system.*

SHIP CONSTRUCTION

A spreadsheet now located at the Robertshome web-page will allow Fleet Action players to do their own conversions and create their own ships using the same formula used as a starting point for the Agents of Gaming books. This spreadsheet was originally forwarded by Rob Glass to a group of gamers seeking details on ship construction for the purposes of a large scale campaign. Later, permission was granted to make it available to members of the AOG Forums.

The spreadsheet provides a base-cost for ships through a formula that adds structure, sensors, acceleration, armor, Elint etc - and has set prices for each "box" of every weapon system.

The basic component cost structures are included in the adjoining tables.

Using these calculators should allay concerns about parity in point costs. For, under these calculators, as all ships have the same structural costs, sensor costs, movement costs and armor costs applied.

The spreadsheet also provides calculators to build and cost new weapons, as well as fighters.

In this manner, all basic components have exactly the same cost considerations.

WEAPONS: A TACTICAL CHOICE

Never forget that weapon choice is as much a tactical consideration as it is a points issue.

Controversy usually erupts when people argue "this ship should cost more because it does more damage".

All weapons are built using the same weapon calculator. Thus, their damage / range / rate of fire are all scaled using the same formula. As a result, guns can vary dramatically for the same cost. Ultimately, choosing which one is the best for your ship is a subjective decision.

Take, for example, an Omega stripped of all its Heavy Lasers and Pulse cannons. If these are replaced with an equal value of additional Standard Particle Beams, the ship would still "cost" the same - but cannot be considered

equal in a matched fight. However, the SPB Omega would be almost untouchable by fighters...

The difference in value, though the costs are the same, is a tactical one. Be cautious when arguing costs: you may, in fact, be arguing tactical choice...

WEAKNESS

One possible weakness of the spreadsheet is the manner in which it costs "advanced" technologies and abilities.

Systems such as ELINT, Jammers, AEGIS and Assault all carry a standard 25pc surcharge on the base hull cost (not including weapon systems). Thus a vessel carrying ELINT 2 will often appear to have the same surcharge as a vessel carrying ELINT 1. Whether there should be a greater cost, or the cost should remain the same to represent a "generational" upgrade, is up to the designer.

Firing arcs are also not factored into the equation. Weapon "boxes" represent individual guns. The Xfactors depend on where these guns are placed, and where their fields of fire overlap. This is where playtesting helps determine the vessel's final cost.

Command is not calculated. I charge 4 points for each command level. Once again, it's up to designers.

Command costs... well, I suggest copying similar ships.

END PRODUCT

This calculator was only ever intended to provide a start point. It is not a "hard and fast" set of rules.

From the final calculation, designers should look at comparable ships etc and "tweak" the values to represent its different capabilities.

For example, ships with the same weapons outfit may have very different firing arcs. While the raw calculation gives them the same point cost, the ship with the better firing arcs is - naturally - much better.

Thus a practical consideration must be applied when setting that ship's final cost. The ship's weapons may have double the firing arcs. Thus, perhaps, its total weapons point value should be boosted by an extra 25-50 per cent. This is where designers have to rely on common sense.

BASIC COMPONENT COST

Structure	3 per box
Armour	3 per point, per location
Turn	2 per box
Accel/Decel	1 per box
EM / Intercept / Guardian	2 per point, per location
Sensors	4 per box
Def Rating	4 per point
Elint, Aeigis, Assault, Jammers	25 per cent surcharge on cost of vessel hull (not eapons). Apply once only.

WEAPONS TABLE

Antimatter Cnvrtr	14
Ballistic Torp	25
Battle Laser	36
Burst Beam	7
Class-A Rack	26
Class-B Rack	26
Class 'L' Rack	20
Class 'S' Rack	13
Energy Mine	31
EP Gun (Electro-pulse)	6
Fusion Cannon	12
Heavy Array	17
Heavy Laser	30
Heavy Plasma	33
Heavy Pulse	19
HPA	30
Ion Torp	26
Interceptors	16
Light Pulse	8
LPA (Laser/Pulse Array)	21
Mag Gun	25
Matter Cannon	18
Medium Laser	21
Medium Plasma	15
Medium Pulse	12
Molecular Disrptr	15
Molecular Pulsar	16
Neutron Laser	37
Particle Cannon	20
Plasma Accel	13
Plasma Net	10
Plasma Stream	14
Pulsar Mine	6
QUAD PART	20
Railgun	20
Shock Cannon	12
SPB (st particle beam)	11
Twin Array	11

BUILD BETTER STARSHIPS

CONSTRUCTION SPREADSHEET



<http://www.robertshome.org/gaming/b5/fa/>

View from the shipyard

Fleet Action Point Calculator - Samples and Analysis

I. Oracle

The first example will be the EA Oracle, a currently published ship.

- Structure of $11*4 = 44$
 - Armor 4/4/4. So $(4+4+4)3 = 36$
 - Max Speed means Turn, so $6x2 = 12$
 - Acceleration 4 + Deceleration 3 = 7
 - Defense of 14 = 56
 - Screens (Interceptors) $3x2 = 6$
 - Sensors $11*4 = 44$
 - Subtotal = 205
 - Elint of 1, increase above total by 25%, new total = 256.25
 - Weapons; Class S structure box of $1*13 +$ Medium Laser structure boxes of $2*21 +$ SPB structure $4*11$. Weapons total = 109
- Thus, there is a straight pointing total of 365. Given the strength of the Elint, it is not too surprising that this ship, through play tests, was increased to a final total of 425 in MEMA.

II. Delphi

To provide comparison is a conversion of a B5W ship, the Delphi. The FA pdf can be found here; <http://www.robertshome.org/gaming/b5/fa/>

- Structure of $11*4 = 44$
 - Armor 4/4/4. So $(4+4+4)3 = 36$
 - Max Speed means Turn, so $6x2 = 12$
 - Acceleration 4 + Deceleration 3 = 7
 - Defense of $13*4 = 42$
 - Screens (Interceptors) $6x2 = 12$
 - Sensors $11*4 = 44$
 - Subtotal = 196
 - Elint of 2, increase above total by 25%, and again by 25%, new total = 306
 - Add Weapons; SPB max X $8*11 +$ Med Pulse Cannon Max X $3*12 = 430$
- Thus there is a straight pointing total of 430. Given that the Oracle was increased by 63 points, a similar increase for the Delphi would be warranted. This would give the Delphi a final cost of 500. This is a fair cost, given the higher Elint abilities, but weakened weapons load vs. the Oracle. Originally, after design and some quick testing, the Delphi had received a cost of 600 points. However, after running it through the spreadsheet, it became apparent that the ship was quite a bit over-costed, mostly because of the reduced weapons load out versus the Oracle. Although it still needed some increase because of the strong power of the Elint 2, it was clear that a reduction was in order. This is the kind of thing the spreadsheet was made for, and despite its omissions, it does have uses for designers.

III. Cronos

Here's another FA conversion of a B5W ship, the EA Cronos. The FA pdf can also be found here; <http://www.robertshome.org/gaming/b5/fa/>

- Structure of $6*4 = 24$
- Armor 5/5. So $(5+5)3 = 30$
- Max Speed is Turn = 16
- Acceleration 4 + Deceleration 3 = 7
- Defense of 13 = 52

This article, by ALEX ROBERTS (aroberts) contains sample calculations of existing, as well as custom, ships along with a look at some issues presented by the spreadsheet and an analysis of the results.

- Screens include Interceptors $2/2 = 8$
 - Sensors $10*4 = 40$
 - Subtotal = 177
 - Elint of 0, so no increase
 - Add Weapons; SPB guns $4*11 +$ Railgun guns $4*20 +$ Hvy Pulse Cannon guns $4*19 = 208$
- Thus there is a straight pointing total of 385. This indicates a few things. First, there may be too many boxes for the HPC and the Railguns, as these are max 2x weapons, but have 4 boxes each. This either indicates that there are perhaps too many boxes, or some ships may be cost too much in relation to boxes and X firepower. Playtesting shows that this ship should be more around the 330 point mark. A good solution is to reduce the boxes to 3 each, and reduce the points 16 to 330. This is another indication that, despite it's issues, the spreadsheet has it's uses for designers.

IV. Torotha

And finally, the Torotha. Given that the published points for this ship are one of the most improperly pointed ships in the game, it will be interesting to look at this ship via the pointing spreadsheet.

- Structure of $3*4 = 12$
 - Armor 4/4. So $(4+4)3 = 24$
 - Max Speed is Turn $20x2 = 40$
 - Acceleration 2 + Deceleration 1 = 3
 - Defense of $14*4 = 56$
 - Screens not present
 - Sensors $10*4 = 40$
 - Subtotal = 175
 - Jammer, so increase above total by 25, new subtotal total = 219
 - Transport adds 25% cost of 55 points.
 - Add Weapons; EPG Max X $1*6 +$ Fusion Cannon Max X $3*15 +$ Molecular Disruptor Max X $2*15 = 81$
- Total = $81 + 175 = 256$ With Transport = 311
- Thus there is a straight pointing total of 311. I think almost anyone who has taken a Torotha will agree that this is a much more reasonable cost than the printed one of 425, although it can be argued that the troop capacity is worth something (and as per Rob's spreadsheet, would gar-

ner it an additional 25% increase to a total of 311). However, on a pure combat ability pointing, 256 is a pretty fair amount for the Torotha.

VII. Issues

The FA point spreadsheet is not perfect by any means. There are some areas that are not accounted for in the calculations, and would certainly need to be adjusted through play testing.

- No accounting for the arcs of weaponry
- No accounting for rate of fire on weapons
- No accounting for Command and Control Abilities
- No accounting for flights of fighters carried
- How is transport as expensive as Elint and Jammers?
- No easy way to account for special abilities
- Interceptors cost the same as EM and Grav shields
- Correlation between boxes and X factor not perfect
- Fighter damage field is odd, and does not account for multiple fighter weapons on one fighter
- The calculations behind the fighters seem a little off. For example, changing the armor from 1 to 6 only results in a point increase of 5 points. This is far off of what effect this increase in armor would have in combat.

VII. Conclusion

The pointing spreadsheet is nice quick way for anyone making his or her own ships for FA to get a baseline cost. The spreadsheet is not perfect, however. It does not account for extensive weapons arcs, flash weaponry, or any extra special abilities a designer may come up with.

In light of this, there is certainly no substitute for extensive play testing. However, given this spreadsheet, it is very easy to get a competent starting cost. This cost can simply be tweaked through play testing to provide a final, fair cost, in comparison to other published ships.

This is best illustrated with the Delphi, for which there has not, as yet, been sufficient opportunity to play test. Because of this fact, the original points were quite high, and did not accurately reflect it's weapon load and combat potential. By running this ship through the spreadsheet, it is easy to see glaring mistakes like this, which can then be refined by the designer.

It also allows an insight into the pointing structures that govern the current game. By looking at the calculations, it is possible to get some understanding as to why some ships and abilities are pointed a certain way, and others differently. Although it is not as good as a thorough designers essay, it does provide some help for those working with the current rules, as well as those designing totally new ships, or converting B5W ships for use in FA.



Made by Kieran Michael (Imagine)

Buying into

Fleet Composition

THE overall composition of a Brakiri force will be dictated by whether it is an uni-corporate fleet or a multi-corporate fleet. Uni-corporate fleets are fleets that only use the units from one corporation, be it the Ak-Habil Conglomerate, or Im-Rehsa Technologies or whoever. The advantage of a fleet from one corporation, is that if there is a ship you want to have lots of, you can spend your entire points on it (within variant availability and deployment of course). The disadvantage to an uni-corporate fleet is that each corporation by themselves has gaping holes in their Fleet organization. For example the only scout available to the Brakiri is the Shakara (Im-Rehsa), all the carriers are Ly-Nakir, the only dedicated anti-fighter ship (Halik) is made by Ak-Habil. In other words when you choose to use only one corporation, you are really hampering your variety of ships. Probably the only fleet I would consider this a good thing is for Im-Rehsa.

The true strength of the Brakiri is in a multi-corporate force. Each of the major corporations specializes in certain fields: Im-Rehsa - advanced weapons and technology, Ly-Nakir - carriers and fighters, Ak-Habil - general-purpose warships and Pri-Wakat - assault forces. Combined, the corporations are an awesome force.

The second thing that determines fleet composition is whether the player using the Brakiri will be using the corporate percentages or not. In a free form battle you don't need to worry about it, but in a campaign you will (unless of course you ignore them). For the purpose of this essay, we will be assuming that the Brakiri player is not using the percentages.

The centerpiece of any Brakiri fleet is the Avioki Heavy Cruiser. The Avioki provides good, long range firepower for a decent, if not high price. It's wise to have at least a handful of these ships, as they are the Brakiri's main, general-purpose warships. A Kaliva should be taken whenever possible as it brings the versatility and hard-hitting strength of the gravitic lance. Unless a fleet is really large, you'll probably only have one of these, due to it's Rare availability. In place of a few Aviokis, a player could use the Antoph Light Cruiser. It's more maneuverable and faster than the Avioki, mounts one graviton beam and two rapid firing, long-range grav cannons. It's a smaller alternative to the general purpose Avioki and it also happens to be 225 points cheaper!

The scariest ship in the Brakiri fleet is without a doubt, the Tashkat Advanced Cruiser. It is sometimes cited as being the best cruiser in the game. It's fast and extremely maneuverable for a capital ship. It has good EW and it has more firepower than every other ship with the exception of the Corumai. It's the only ship besides the scout that uses the gravitic shifter. It has two downsides. One, it can't take a whole lot of damage, but this is a problem with all Brakiri ships. And two, it has a limited deployment of 33%. What this

*Close your eyes and imagine you're a Director on one of the Krona's mighty warships. You step up to the viewport and scan the sight ahead of you. The bulk of your fleet is made up of the tall, majestic Avioki class of cruisers. Here and there the compact, beetle-like shape of a Halik weaves in and out of the Avioki formations. Off in the distance you can see the large, bulky shape of a Cidikar Heavy Carrier surrounded by swarms of fighters. Your eyes are then drawn to the sleek, deadly shape of a Tashkat Advanced Cruiser as it cruises among the Avioki's, like a shark amongst a school of fish. And all this is at your command... In this essay, **SCOTT McGAFFIN** will cover the general composition of a Brakiri force, the technology at it's disposal, and the various advantages and disadvantages the Brakiri navy has.*

means is that in a 10,000 point fleet you can't have more than three of these. Definitely take at least one of these ships if not the maximum amount, as they are an amazing ship! Generally avoid the Takata unless you're fighting a large fleet battle, as it's gravitic mines are far more useful versus a slew of targets. Spend the points on Tashkats instead.

Another ship that should be taken is the Shakara Scout Cruiser. Because of the Brakiri's long range capabilities, this ship is a must. It's reasonably fast and pretty maneuverable. Unfortunately it has no offensive capabilities whatsoever. Also because of it's restricted deployment, you'll only have one in a 10,000 point fleet.

Probably one of the most important ships in the fleet is the Halik fighter-killer. Brakiri ships tend to be anti-fighter weak (the Avioki only mounts four graviton pulsars, and even the high-tech Tashkat only mounts four graviton pulsars). A Brakiri fleet should take at least one Halik. The number taken will depend on your opponent. If you're fighting the EA, with its fighter hordes, you should definitely take a couple Haliks. Against the Abbai or Pak'ma'ra, one should suffice. This of course depends on the overall fleet size. The Halik is also reasonably adept at being a fleet escort. A ship that gets close enough can find itself the unwitting target of six graviton pulsars, which can cause a great deal of hurt. The downside to the Halik is it will probably take a pounding as its EW isn't the best and it has a large profile. I'd generally advise against rushing headlong at a prepared opponent with a Halik as the Halik will probably find itself being turned into debris very quickly. If you're up against a fighter weak opponent, and you're not sure whether to take one or two Haliks, take a Haltona in place of one Halik. The Haltona is an agile little gun platform, which can easily move around and exploit the damaged flank of an opponent. It may have half the anti-fighter capabilities of the Halik, but it has two graviton beams to make up for it.

The Corumai should generally be avoided unless fighting a large battle (at least 10,000 pts.) as it is

a rather poor example of a dreadnought. It's too slow and unmaneuverable and has a poor number of anti-fighter guns. It could be isolated and destroyed too easily in a small battle. The points would be better spent elsewhere.

The other means of dealing with enemy ships and fighters is by bringing your own fighters. And this the Brakiri can do superbly. Out of all the published League races, no one can field as many fighters as the Brakiri. The Brakiri have an excellent array of carriers from the small Brikorta Light Carrier up to the massive Lykorai Supercarrier. Depending on the size of the battle (assume 10,000 pts.), a Brokados or Cidikar carrier should be taken. Besides being able to bring 2-4 squadrons of fighters, both ships possess their own offensive capabilities in the form of heavy lasers. The Cidikar does have better close in weapons though. Avoid using the Lykorai in anything but the largest battle, as it has no real offensive power. Keep in mind what each carrier is capable of carrying. The Brikorta can't carry Pikitos, and half of the Cidikar's complement can only be Pikitos.

This brings us to the fighters: the Falkosi interceptor and the Pikitos assault fighter. The Falkosi is a decent all-round interceptor, although it does have poor armor. When facing a fighter heavy opponent, you should definitely take lots of these to combat any enemy fighters. The Pikitos could be used in an anti-fighter role, but it would be a waste, and it isn't as good as the Falkosi. The Pikitos's strength lies in its anti-shiping role. A flight of these can make a mess of a ship quite nicely via their powerful light graviton beam.

Advantages/Disadvantages

To know and win with the Brakiri is to know their good points and their bad points. First, the good points. The Brakiri are one of a small handful of races that uses gravitic drives. This grants them movement capabilities most races do not have and also it gives them a 'free' critical when they roll 'efficiency reduced' on the thruster critical table. Secondly they have average to excellent armor. The Ikorta is a good example of this.

Brakiri tactics



BRAKIRI TIASHKAT CRUISER: This image, by Michael Krocan, was posted the Babylon 5 Modeller's Guild (B5MG.com)

They also have access to a good range of high tech equipment such as gravitic shields and gravitic shifters. This is all countered by poor structure on most of their ships. Some of the ships (especially the Avioki) tend to have very few hit locations, so the corresponding structure block gets eaten up very quickly.

The Brakiri main heavy weapon, the graviton beam, (unlike the EA, Minbari, Centauri, Narn and Abbai) is interceptible. Against races with poor interception capabilities this isn't as important but against races with lots of interception (like the EA), it can be devastating. Their ships also tend to have a poor number of secondary weapons (predominantly the graviton pulsar). This is one of the main reasons with the Brakiri should avoid close-and-hose situations whenever possible, and why the ships like the Halik are so important.

Technology

The Brakiri have access to a respectable array of weapons and equipment. All of them are based on gravitic technology.

Gravitic Shields- About half of Brakiri units has gravitic shields. Unlike the Minbari's EM shields, the grav shield cannot be armored, so very little damage is needed to destroy them. Also unlike the Minbari, a shield generator is needed to regulate the power to the shields. Not all of the units possessing shields can power up all their shields. Special attention should be paid to make sure that the shield facing the enemy is

powered up. Without it you'll take more damage and your hit profile will go up.

Gravitic Shifter- The gravitic shifter is an awesome piece of equipment. Anyone who's ever been centrelined by an EA Nova can appreciate the capabilities of the shifter. When using the shifter, pay special attention to your opponent's firing arcs. A simple hex facing can be the difference between life and death. The downside to the shifter is it's long recharge time (3 turns) and poor range penalty (-1/hex). Also remember it's not as effective against gravitic drive ships.

Graviton Beam- The graviton beam is the main heavy weapon of the Brakiri. It's a decent long-range weapon comparable to a heavy laser. It has the same slow recharge rate, similar fire control and similar damage.

The main difference is the graviton beam has a better range penalty (-1/4 hexes), it can't be fired in sustained mode and it is interceptible. Against high interception race, this last point is extremely important. What this means is that more graviton beams would have to be fired at an opponent to overload his/her interception capabilities.

Gravitic Lance- A superb long range weapon that has the flexibility to be either fired as two graviton beams or as one sustained heavy beam. It has the same recharge rate as the graviton beam (don't forget the 'cool down' turn), the same fire control, and it has a superior range penalty (-1/5 hexes).

Grav Cannon- The grav cannon is an excellent weapon, one of my favorites. Simple put, it's a

good long range, one turn firing weapon. It doesn't do a lot of damage, but it can fire every turn! Unfortunately it doesn't see a lot of use in the Brakiri fleet.

Graviton Pulsar- The graviton pulsar is the standard light weapon of the modern Brakiri fleet. It really shines when more power is put into it to increase its number of pulses fired. Unfortunately it's ability to intercept is terrible and it's fire control is substandard compared to most other race's secondary weapons.

Gravitic Bolt- The precursor to the graviton pulsar, the gravitic bolt is a poor light weapon with all the same failings as the graviton pulsar. But, instead of increasing the number of pulses fired, any extra applied power just increases the damage by a little bit. Never downgrade your ships from graviton pulsars to gravitic bolts for extra points. You'll regret it.

Gravitic Mine- The gravitic mine is a weapon designed for fleet engagements. Against a small force, it's a waste of points in that to get it to work, you have to count on the enemy being in a certain place. Against a highly mobile opponent, this problem can be more acute. If it works, it can affect a significant number of units. The damage it inflicts isn't very much, but it ignores armor. The weapon does automatically hit it's target hex, so you don't have to worry about misfires and scatter.

And that concludes this discussion on the Brakiri fleet. Adjust your tie, comb your hair and go forth and conquer for the Krona!

When bravado meets the brave

*This scenario was written by **KEITH FRYE** to explore the characteristics of the early ships and HCVs of the Earth Alliance and Narn Regime, as well as investigate the possibilities of an implied, low intensity conflict between those two governments. The rules intended for use in playing this are Fleet Action, but the scenario could easily be converted to B5W. SGP's are listed. Where possible.*

IN 2219 a Narn expeditionary force intruded into the Epsilon Indi system, a system in the Earth Alliance sphere of influence. The EA was in the process of concluding an orbital survey when the Narn claimed the system by right of numbers, necessity and as inheritors of the failing Centauri Empire (the system was once controlled by the Centauri), while Earth claimed ownership by prior survey. Earth had the survey ship, while Narn had the troops.

The confrontation escalated as each side, conscious of the eyes of the galaxy upon them, refused to back down.

At the same time neither felt the other would risk a shooting war. Warships of both governments began to arrive in the Epsilon Indi system.

The situation became explosive when a frigate 'bumped' a transport ship that was trying to break the blockade and land troops upon Epsilon Indi IV. The transport spiraled out of control and crashed onto the planet, losing all hands aboard.

Shortly thereafter, the shooting war began.

Setup:

Place the map in the standard left-right configuration. There is an old Centauri jump gate in the center hex of the bottom row on the map.

The top-most hex row on the map represents the atmosphere of the planet Epsilon Indi IV.

The EA TF Proteus and the Auxiliary Squadron sets up first, on the left-hand map, between the jump gate and the planet; the Olympus and Challenger Task Forces are kept off-board as reinforcements.

Then the Narn 1st EG and the Frigate Groupment deploy near the jump gate; the Destroyer and 2nd EG Groupments are kept off-board as reinforcements. Both sides initial speed is zero (they're just sitting there, glaring at each other...)

The Narn are considered the attackers for purposes of initiative.

Reinforcements:

Starting on turn 3, reinforcements are diced for as per the standard B5FA rules, with an initial +2 modifier. They may enter either via jump engines or by using the gate.

*The EA TF Challenger has a +3 modifier for arrival, and the Narn 2nd EG has a +4. Historically, the latter's arrival was cancelled when the Narn realised the extent of Earth's resolve in the matter.

Victory Conditions:

The Narn need to land troops (at least six assault shuttles) upon Epsilon Indi IV. This would render Earth's claim moot, since possession is 9/10ths of the law. The EA needs to prevent this. If either side drives off the other, that side wins.

Political Complications:

Neither the Earth Alliance nor the Narn Regime has any ingrained hostility for the other. In fact, both sides tend to empathise with the other's situation; both are struggling "new" races. To reflect the natural hesitation to initiate deadly combat, the side that destroys more enemy ships **LOSES**, having incurred a diplomatic penalty. Capital ships rank higher than HCV's for purposes of determining diplomatic penalty

Morale:

Because both sides lack definitive instructions for dealing with a conflict with a friendly government, when resolving Squadron Morale checks (B5FA) add a +4 modifier to the die roll. This makes squadrons on both sides more likely to break off than fight to the death.

Historical resolution:

The Narn home world was closer to the seat of conflict, but the Earth Alliance had more ships in the area. With the arrival of a Carrier Task Group, headed by the EAS Challenger, the Narn withdrew from the system. There would be several years of low intensity border conflict until the situation was resolved by the Treaty of 2224.

The political ramifications were far-reaching. Certain members of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, especially those that shared a border with the expansionistic Narns, as did the Brakiri, saw how Earth had handled the Narn confrontation. They would remember this, a decade later, when the Dilgar invaded.

What If..?

It would be interesting to see, as a hypothetical scenario, how the arrival of the Narn 2nd Expeditionary Groupment would have affected the balance of power. Alter the Narn 2nd EG and EA TF Challenger arrival modifiers to +4.

Notes and Conversions:

The SCS's for some of these ships exist only for the B5FA or B5W product and not both. In each case in this scenario where a question mark occurs on Squadron/Ship Generation points, the value has been estimated.

• The Olympus CRV(P) Alpha is a B5W plasma-armed version of that vessel. To convert in Fleet Action, replace the Medium Pulse batteries with Medium Plasma Batteries.

• The Hyperion CR(P) (Beta) is a B5W plasma-armed version of that vessel. To convert in Fleet Action, use the Hyperion Assault Cruiser with one flight of Tigers replacing the breaching pods and assault shuttles. Increase the CMD rating to 9.

• The Hyperion CR(M) (Lambda) is a B5FA missile-armed version of that vessel. To convert in B5W, replace the plasma batteries with Standard Missile Racks. Each rack has a magazine capacity of 20.

• The T'Loth CR(A) Alpha is an extrapolated early version which has standard particle beams in place of light pulse cannon.

• The Rothan DD(P) is a B5FA plasma-armed version of the Rongoth DD. To convert in B5W, replace the Light and Heavy Pulse batteries with Light and Heavy Plasma batteries.

• The T'Rakk FF(P) is a B5FA plasma-armed vessel which represents a single wing of the T'Loth Cruiser, fitted out as a frigate as an economy and time-saving measure. To convert in B5W, it might be easier to use the Thentus, instead.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Conversions and spreadsheet-based costings of the early model Earthforce ships can now be found at:

<http://www.robertshome.org/gaming/b5/fa>

SCENARIO: INCIDENT AT EPSILON INDI

Earth Alliance Forces

<i>Task Force Proteus:</i>	SGPs:	B5FA		B5W	
1 x Hyperion CR(P) (Alpha Model)		360?		575	
2 x Hyperion CR(M)		530		850?	
1 x Oracle SC		455	= 1345	600	= 2025
<i>Auxiliary Support Division:</i>					
4 x Hermes Transport		720		1680	

Task Force Olympus:

1 x Olympus CRV(P) (Alpha model)		310?		500	
3 x Artemis FF(H)		810	= 1120	1875	= 2375

**Task Force Challenger:*

1 x Avenger CCV		250		480	
w/8 flights Tiger Starfury		280		2556	
2 x Hyperion CR(M)		530		850?	
(2 x Artemis FF(H)		540	= 1600	1250	= 5136

Narn Regime Forces

1st Expeditionary Groupment:

1 x T'Loth CR(A)(Alpha model)		340		440?	
W/2 flights T'Khar Assault Shuttles		50		300??	
and 2 flights Gorith Starfighters		80		480	
2 x Rothan DD(P)		490	= 960	870?	= 2090??

Frigate Groupment:

4 x T'Rakk FF(P)		1080		1480	
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Destroyer Groupment:

4 x Rothan DD(P)		980		1740?	
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**2nd Expeditionary Groupment:*

1 x T'Loth CR(A)(Alpha model)		340		440?	
W/2 flights T'Khar Assault Shuttles		50		300??	
and 2 flights Gorith Starfighters		80		480	
2 x Rothan DD(P)		490	= 960	870?	= 2090??



How to have your ideas and views published in *Babcom*

THESE guidelines are for purely practical reasons. Most of problems can be avoided by authors following the following suggestions and by simply paying attention to how things appear in an edition of *Babcom*.

Every submission should have the name/ e-mail of the author and can also have his B5Wars forums nickname. The email address is so *Babcom* can contact you for clarifications.

Word document and Text are the easier and preferable formats, but e-mail is also acceptable.

Each submission should also have:

- A) a title,
- B) a line indicating to which section of the newsletter it concerns.
- C) a short description to make our work easier to recognise them, as well as act as an introduction. Optional items: era to which the submission takes place (either expressed in a year, or in a descriptive title (i.e. "EA-Minbari War").)

Authors should have in mind that their work might be slightly edited in order for it to fit the newsletter layout. Articles with important changes will only be used if the author agrees upon the final form of his article.

Submission Guidelines

The average submissions should be about 400-800 words. A 2000 word essay would take up

about two pages. But we don't want too many of those. We're always in need of smaller "tips" and "tricks" articles.

Don't be afraid to send items only 4 or 5 sentences long: we need these tips to help fill little holes in pages, and any leftovers will find a nice place in a special page of their own.

Stories should be written in the third-person. This means no "I", "my", "our", or "his". Why? It removes the personal element, reducing the chances anyone will take offence.

Scenario submission Guideline.

We want scenarios that will be fun and easy to play. That means we'd like to see original ideas, and battles designed to be neither too short or too long. A scenario should follow the format used by AoG in their books, and be about 800 words.

Format: Title and Short Description (Mandatory) A vs B, by (name).

Short description. This will be from two lines to a couple of short Paragraphs. You can describe in as concise a manner as possible the background that led to the conflict, or

Set-Up (Mandatory) Analytical description of forces available to each side, their positions on the map, and any special clauses that might apply (ship already damaged, weapons powered off etc..). Describe the forces on each side down to

the last ship (assigning numbers or names to distinguish ships especially if they are of the same class), and their position, facing and speed on a standard AoG map. Position, facing and speed may be exact or even quite general.

Victory Condition. (Mandatory) Two choices: a) Short Paragraphs describing what the author considers the victory condition is for each combatant. There can be more than one degree of success for every side. These should be in descending order: Total victory/ Major Victory/ Significant victory/ Minor Victory / Draw / etc.

Special Rules (optional, and to be avoided if not necessary) should be short and to the point: for example: Primus no2 has all its BLs unpowered and cannot start charging them until turn 2 due to a sabotage.

Tactics (optional) Short section giving BRIEF hints to playing each side.

Other Notes / Variations/ Comments (optional as well) Anything that might not go in the previous sections: for example: tips to substitute ships for a varied scenario, or describing a way to use another side or race.

News Items

If you have any piece of news you deem it important for us and fellow players to find about, send it to: b5news_submissions@yahoo.com

There's no safe Haven when it comes to speed



Hello all, yes this is me the most obnoxious of all the Fanheads out there - REID HUPACH.

I am attempting to do the unthinkable, give a ship by ship analysis of the Centauri fleet. In each I will cover the ships weaknesses and strengths, its role as an individual ship, how it should be used in small actions and again how it is used in large engagements. Now that I've told you what I'm going to do I wish to post a disclaimer: Any tactics, strategies, off color comments or just frustrating facts are my opinion and mine alone. The host of the newsletter may not agree with anything I rant on about. . Yell at me and I'll gladly defend any statement I make.

THE HAVEN is the smallest ship in a Centauri fleet based heavily on medium/heavy combat vessels. Several people when looking at the Haven, may see a weakly armed, easily gutted Gnat of a ship. But as a wise man once said, don't judge a book by the lack of nude pictures in it. Yes the weakness of the Haven is its inability to take a real hard hit from any of several heavy weapons. It also has one of the weakest sensor ratings in the Centauri fleet. But beside that it has few other weaknesses.

The strengths far out weigh any weaknesses it has. This ship is fast, very fast, it is one of the few ships which can run down a fighter flight which is unfortunate enough to lose initiative. It also has one of the best initiatives in the game, it even has a +1 bonus over a whitestar. It is also an agile ship, which gives it several advantages in up close Knife fights. The weapons load out though not the most powerful is easily exploited by the facts that the TA's can fire every turn and the MC can give a good Killing blow to a crippled ship.

Ok now how to use the bothersome gnat. I have stated before on the Forum that I feel the Haven is the Heavy fighter for the Centauri fleet. It basically can fill that role extremely well. I enjoy using it to defend my other ships from fighters, but it is also a great seek out and destroy those same fighters type of ship. When a fighter flight loses initiative to my Haven and doesn't fly way far away, I fly my fun little pest right up behind them and centerline the flight. I almost always dedicate 2 or 3 points to ccew using that to lock on to the flight, well 4 TA's can make even a flight of Nials have serious thoughts of the afterlife.

The Haven is also very effective run in packs, you really can't call it a wolf pack but maybe coyote pack is better suited. Unlike other packs, which it can

be determined before move who they will go after, Havens can be more sneaky. One of my favorite moves is to move out to a flank, usually my opponents will not be targeting these ships, they have bigger fish to fry, I don't even have them in a group resembling a pack just keep 5 or 6 loosely together. When an enemy MCV or HCV loses Initiative (sometimes you can be lucky with a scout), swarm like a hive of angry hornets, close to One hex on the sides or flanks and BLAST AWAY.

Matter cannons do nasty things to small ships after the Twin arrays have stripped off the outer systems. If lets say 5 Havens close on a ship that's 20 twin arrays and 5 Matter Cannons, that will strip the side off most capitols and gut most MCV/HCV ships.

In a large fleet action having a few Havens around will make your Senti's much more effective, remember ships fire first. When a Haven flies with your Senti's he will have a chance to knock a few enemies fighters down before the dogfight giving you a numerical

advantage with your Senti's, which is the only way they can really shine.

Now I will always take a Haven or two in any fleet, quite a few in large-scale actions (I think my record was 20 once in a fight VS the EA). Against the Minbari I will ALWAYS take them in packs, they are one of the few ships in the game which can give white stars fits, one on one, no but in packs of 4 or 5, it's a DEAD Whitestar. Koumdros may not like me saying this but it is VERY true.

So in conclusion, use Havens with almost the same tactics you would use light cavalry in a Napoleonic's game. Use you speed to exploit flanks, swarm units which are crippled or easily killed, and of course to keep his fast units occupied.

'It is one of the few ships which can run down a fighter flight,

What do you want?

COMBAT TIPS!

Circling the Wagon

IN John Gurnett's "Defeating Maneuverability" tip found in the tactics manual, he suggesting grouping together to avoid being picked off. Another method against units that are more maneuverable than yours is to travel slow so that your ships has the ability to turn up to twice each turn.

This way, the more maneuverable units will be flying around you while you do a smaller circle. You can turn your damaged sides away from them by calculating their thrust and turn delays while hitting their sides almost consistently. This is especially effective in an tournament or fixed map environment.

- Faustus Maximus

(B5W) Using your other front

(Centauri Tactic)

SINCE many Centauri ships have most of their main weapons in their front sections and jump engines in their aft sections, one strange way to approach the enemy would be to start at speed 1, reduce thrust until negative, turn and fly in reverse towards the enemy.

Using your superior EW and maneuverability to avoid damage, you ships will arrive with relatively intact without losing anything really important and as you fly pass, you can unload your fresh "rear" at them.

Of course you have to watch out for fighters and ballistic weapons are not effective if used this way.

- Faustus Maximus

(B5W) Strike Fighters

WHEN engaging ships with fighters, attacking up to 3 hexes away (or 4 if against the Pak) is not a bad idea. Return fire is unlikely to hit and the fighters still have a reasonable amount of chance to score respectable damage on the ship. If against Ships with no aft weapon coverage and/or shields(white stars, vorchans,etc), then sliding in and under from the rear at range zero can be devastating .

- Christopher Phang (regret)

PBEM?

Getting your best shot in through email wars

GREG KNIAZ looks at the Problems of PBEM and how to address them.

PBEM offers a solution to one problem and causes a few more at the same time. Obviously the problem solved is not having anyone to play face with. Once a suitable opponent has been found a couple of problems arise.

Cheating

How do you trust your opponent? You aren't there to witness the die rolls. Was that really a lucky string of 20's or 1's or was it cheating? Luckily there are tools out there that can alleviate this problem, Internet Dice Rollers. They are capable of rolling different numbers of different sided dice and sending copies of the rolls to both parties. Two that I used to use are <http://www.irony.com> and <http://www.pbem.com>.

The best of the bunch for B5Wars is definitely Brett Nash's system <http://www.nash.nu/B5Wars/AutoGM/>.

Not only is it capable of rolling dice, it understands some of the weapons systems in B5 and automatically rolls the correct dice, telling you if you hit and if so how well and then rolls the appropriate number of locations (it even splits raking weapons into groups of 10).

Server issues

As long as we are talking about Brett's site, lets discuss the delay server. A simple e-mail to Brett and your game is set up. You can use this system for simultaneous events. EW allocation is a perfect example. Whoever completes their EW allocation first sends his message to the server. The opponent is notified that the server is holding the message. When the opponent sends his allocation, both e-mails are released to the players. No arguing over whether someone looked at your allocation before doing their own.

Time

This is the real killer. How can you play a game meant to be played in a couple hours by exchanging e-mails? It would take forever. Believe it or not, there are people who can do it. However, there are plenty of people who just can't check their e-mail that often or just don't have that much spare time. Usually this leads to scrapping initiative and making all movement simultaneous. This allows you to complete a turn in as little as three e-mails.

1 - EW allocation, ballistic weapon launch and movement.

2 - Weapons fire declaration.

3 - Fire resolution.

Some people have found that this renders fighters useless. Since they no longer benefit from huge initiative bonuses they have to guess where the ships will be. These people add another

phase between steps 1 and 2 and possibly add a step 4 for fighter fire. Still others believe that HCV's and medium ships should have their own phase. What is the right way to do it? Whatever ends up working out best for you and your opponent. Agree on how often you can exchange e-mails and how long you want the match to take. Use this information to select the method that best fits your needs.

Tournament

The 3rd Annual B5W PBEM Tournament is currently underway. Agents of Gaming has graciously offered to provide prizes to the top three players of the 36 entrants. You can follow the action by pointing your browser to <http://babylon5wars.50megs.com>.

I will be posting more PBEM tidbits and rules suggestions on my web site as time permits. I am working on a PBEM ladder system also. I plan to not only have overall rankings, but to have race specific rankings as well. More on this will appear at a later date.

Another way to PBEM is to join an ongoing campaign or fight in one of the multi-player battles that are hosted every once in a while. Byron Sinor hosted a massive Dilgar war battle last year that was very highly regarded. I am currently running a replay of the Dilgar war using the scenarios in Showdowns 4. First to Fall, the invasion of Alaca is about to start. Follow the action at the web site listed above.



Reviving a legend: B5 returns

J. MICHAEL Straczynski, creator of Babylon 5, has been posting the latest word on the coming B5 TV movie and pilot for the Sci Fi cable channel called Legend of the Rangers.

A new ship will be making the rounds, though little has been revealed so far.

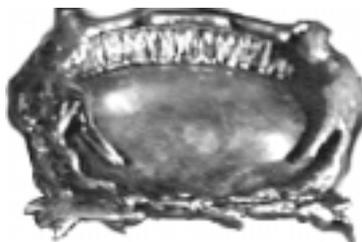
The lead character is a Ranger called David, who's in trouble with the Rangers Council. Two of his friends are Dulann and Sarah, and the three are assigned to a ship called the Liandra.

It's set in the B5 universe about 3 years after the events of "Objects at Rest."

"Sets are being built even as I write this," JMS said.

"Designs have been worked out that take the B5 look to a new level, including a ship unlike anything we've ever done before, very ambitious, very different appearance."

With the demise of Netter Digital, a new company has been sourced to do the special effects - GVFX, a Vancouver based company.



The company has worked on such sci-fi shows as The Outer Limits and Stargate SG-1 and Total Recall 2070.

In a recent message to a moderated B5 newsgroup, JMS posted the following progress

report: "Most of the cast has been set, there are only two roles left to be cast and those should be locked down in a couple of days. It's starting to pick up considerable speed and momentum. SFC and WB are *extremely* pleased with the script.

"I think people are going to be pleased and surprised by the look and feel of the show...it has an energy that feels a lot like S3 of B5...by turns funny, intense, weird, with action and some very nice character stuff. It's gonna be very cool..."

SCIFI.COM confirmed that production of the pilot began in Vancouver on May 14.

In addition, B5 cast member Andreas Katsulas will reprise his role of G'Kar in the pilot, which will be helmed by Michael Vejar with a script by JMS.

- www.B5LR.com

Pak'ing a punch: plazma webs work

PEOPLE tend to think that the Pak suck against fighters when they look at the plazma web because of the limited 3 hex range. The true power of the plazma web is that the threat of it keeps fighters far away from all of your ships.

One of the biggest strengths of fighters is their ability to hit a ship where it is weakest and doing that is a lot more difficult against the Pak because of the very nature of the web.

An opponent may not worry about getting within 3 hexes of another race's ship that has minimal defensive weapons and did not allocate CCEW as they attack another ship.

This is not true for the Pak

They do not need to allocate any CCEW to fire a Plasma Web and it will automatically hit every fighter in the hex targeted.

It isn't the fact that the opponent wants to stay 4 hexes away from a Pak ship, it's that the opponent wants to stay 4 hexes away from all of the Pak ships.

This makes fighter usage against them very limiting. Coupled with the fact that only a few fighters will usually hit because of the massive range+intercept penalties and the damage reduction on each of their guns, this makes all but the heaviest fighters very ineffective for the points being spent on them.

The deterring nature of the plazma webs should be kept in mind when manoeuvring your ships. When you space your ships out appropriately (keeping your ships more than 4 and less than 6



PAK'MA'RA STRATEGY AND TACTICS: The Plasma Web

In this article, TODD BOYCE seeks to dispel misconceptions about the effectiveness of the Plasma Web as a defensive weapon by providing some insight into its strengths and strategies for its use.

hexes apart) you can create large zones that your enemy fighters won't usually enter.

For this reason, the enemy's fighters will usually try to attack the ships on the edges.

If a ship becomes heavily damaged, you can move it to the center of this zone protecting it from further fighter attacks.

If several flights of fighters are threatening one side of your formation, try to shift the ships that have multiple webs to that side.

This is because your opponent probably won't put all his fighters in the same hex to attack since it only takes one plazma web to defend against all of them that way.

By having more webs available, you'll be able to defend against more of them and further reduce their effectiveness. The Ar'tees is particularly good for this because it has a high initiative and 3 plazma webs.

It is always a good idea to have several Tra'shu'li and/or Urik'hal in your fleet because once in a while, if your opponent is using heavy fighters, one of these ships will beat them on initiative.

When that happens and you have the opportunity, fly up and dump a plazma web on them. Over the course of a game this may happen several times and almost any flight of fighters is in serious trouble after the second plazma web hits it.

Drimdalon, of the b5wars.agentsofgaming.com site, suggests the following: If you are using optional enhancements, you might consider using an Expert Plasma Officer on one or two of your ships.

This will increase the range of those ship's webs to 4 which will surprise your opponent and probably influence him to stay 5 hexes away from all of your ships.